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**Dear Lalli**  
**By**  
**Wendy Lalli**

*Dear Lalli,*

*I'm semi-retired after working over twenty years as a warehouse manager in the Chicago suburbs. My wife and I also own a rental property in Florida which we've managed from Chicago for about ten years. Although we've really enjoyed renting out our condo to families who wanted to get away from it all, we decided to sell this property and invest the profit in something else. I'm looking for part-time employment both for additional income and so I'll have something interesting to do.*

*Several years ago, I took some computer courses - word processing and excel - at our local community college and thoroughly enjoyed it. I also taught myself the basics of XP professional. I use all of these programs in the management of my condo and would love to find employment where these skills would be useful.*

*How can I find a part-time position for just two or three days a week that would let me use my computer skills and work close to home? Do you have any suggestions for networking with people or companies in the suburbs?*

*Thank you for being patient with me, as I adjust to this new life style of semi-retirement.*

*Sincerely Yours,*  
*Larry in Lombard*

Dear Larry,

Thank you for writing. I gather from your letter that although you're selling the Florida property, you really enjoyed your experience in real estate. It also sounds like you were pretty good at it. Your computer skills are also a plus.

I would suggest that although you yourself are not planning on going back into real estate as a landlord, you still look for new employment in this field. Here's why. (1) It's something you seem to like doing and are good at, (2) you have real time experience in this field that would be particularly attractive to a potential employer.

There are a couple things you might consider. The first is getting a real estate license and working for a local realtor. Many agents work at real estate part time so your situation would not be all that unusual. You would, of course, have to take courses to get your license but you can do this online now without too much hassle or expense.

If this holds no interest for you or is more of a commitment of time and energy than you want to make, here's another idea. Work as support staff for a realty company that sells property, manages property or both. From your employer's perspective, your condo experience would be a wonderful addition to your computer skills. And I think you would find such a setting comfortable, familiar and rewarding.

To find such a spot, write a letter describing your computer skills, your expertise as a property manager and your interest in the local real estate market. Get the names and addresses of as many local realtors as you can and send off your letter. Make sure you address it directly to the head of each office.

In the last paragraph, say you'll be calling shortly to set up an appointment to meet in person at a time convenient to you both. Include your phone number in your letter just in case they want to call you as soon as they read it. Follow-up by calling everyone you send a letter to. The more people you see, the greater your chances of finding someone who is hiring. Plus, it will give you a chance to see what the different offices are like and if you would want to work in these places.

If you interview with someone who was willing to meet you but who doesn't have a spot for you right now, ask them if they know of any other realtors who might be hiring. That way you can network in to other offices.

Finally, tell everyone you know that you're looking for work in a realtors' office and ask who they might know that you can contact for an interview.

Good luck and I hope you enjoy this new phase of your life.

Wendy

*Dear Lalli,*

*After working many years for the same company and getting excellent reviews, I was promised a promotion effective next month. This promotion is very important to me because the workload in my current role has decreased considerably and the company is in the midst of reorganization. I was counting on moving into this new position as assurance that the company really needed me and my job was safe. Instead, another manager was given the job. Like me, this person had been with the company many years. My boss, who had promised me this job, has a new boss himself. But he still assures me that he'll promote me soon. Should I believe him? Should I use other contacts within the company to put pressure on him? What are my options?*

*Helen in Hyde Park*

Dear Helen,

Right now you should probably make finding a new job a priority. Obviously, you're an excellent worker and well thought of in your company. But the quality of your work has nothing to do with what's going on. Reorganizations are just that. They're all about change usually beginning with cutting staff. And the more senior you are the more danger you're in. Older workers tend to command larger salaries than younger ones. They also are closer to collecting on costly pension plans. So downsizing staff members over 35 or 40 can be very attractive to decision makers concerned with boosting profit ratios by cutting costs. It sounds like you're particularly

vulnerable because of the lack of work in your department. Is this fair? Of course not, but who said life is fair?

Realistically, whatever your boss says, he is not really in a position to look after you as he himself has a new manager. He could be fighting for his own position let alone yours. As far as using other contacts in the company, I just don't think that's wise. For one thing, like your boss, they may have to fight their own battles to survive. Even if their power is secure, you don't want to go over your boss's head when he has already said he would support you. Finally, whatever the reason, giving the position you were promised to someone else is a clear message that you are not one of the favored.

My take on it is this – you have a job until the powers that be decide they can put your paycheck to better use. So use whatever time you have before they make this decision to find something else. Network as much as you can outside the company. Contact headhunters so they're aware you're actively looking. Go to association meetings within your industry to meet as many people as you can. Do not let anyone in the company you now work for know that you are doing this! It could be used to justify letting you go sooner rather than later. Use your cell phone for calls about job opportunities and go outside the office to take and make these calls. Also send e-mails about new opportunities on your home computer only! Headhunters, of course, should be totally discrete.

It may be that your boss will be able to come thorough for you and you'll be promoted in the next month or so. If this happens take the new position and do your best in it. But don't give up your search. Reorganizations go on for several months, sometimes even years. And unless you are in a role that's absolutely crucial for the company's bottom line, your job is rarely secure during this time period.

Good luck and welcome to the ever-changing new world of work!

Wendy